

REMARKS

Applicants thank Examiner Yun for discussing the application with Applicants' representative on October 16, 2003. During the discussion, Applicants' representative explained that the effective filing date of this application is April 6, 2000. Applicants note that the Office was instructed to amend the specification, as indicated in box 17 of the Utility Patent Application Transmittal Form filed December 8, 2000, by inserting the following sentence:

This application is a Continuation of International Appl. No. PCT/JP00/02231, filed on April 6, 2000.

before the first line of the Specification. Thus, it is believed that the claim for benefit under 35 U.S.C. § 120 is correct, and that the claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) should be GRANTED.

Since a proper claim to PCT/JP00/02231 was made when this application was originally filed, the rejection of Claims 1-15 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) in view of Nagano et al. (US 6428914) is traversed, as Nagano is not available as prior art. It is noted that Nagano's US filing date is December 7, 2000. Additionally, it is noted that Nagano is a continuation application of international application PCT/JP00/02232, which was filed on April 6, 2000. Since Nagano's international filing date is before November 29, 2000, Nagano's effective filing date, and thus §102(e) date, is December 7, 2000. The Examiner's attention is directed to M.P.E.P. § 706.02(f)(1), subsections II and III. Since Applicants' effective filing date is based on the international filing date of PCT/JP00/02231 of April 6, 2000, Nagano is not available as prior art. Thus, it is requested that the Examiner withdraw this rejection.

The objection to the drawings, as originally filed, is obviated by amendment. It is requested that the Examiner withdraw this objection.

In view of the above, it is believed that Claims 1-15 are in a condition for allowance, and that the application is ready for passage to issue. An early and favorable indication is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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